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## (Hotter Than a Jet Stream) Burning

by [agenthill](#)

### Summary

Fareeha knew her mother survived her encounter with Widowmaker, and understands Ana's reasons for going underground. What she does not understand is this: where she and Ana now stand in their relationship with one another. What she does not understand is this: how her mother can return and expect things to be the same as they ever were. What she does not understand is this: how she feels when she speaks to her mother now, how she thinks of herself in relation to her mother's legacy, how she can hope to move forward when she is constantly reminded of the past.

Or,

Ana returns, and Fareeha struggles to reconcile her emotions and her expectations.

# Deadwater

## Chapter Notes

Well folks, here it is, something multichapter, plot focused, and *not* horrifically stylistic and/or contrived. So, basically, unlike anything I've written in a long while. It's a bit less polished, a bit more raw, and a hell of a lot more personal.

This is, as always, dedicated to the lovely Skitch who [wrote a thing](#) based on [Touch](#) which you should all read. Like, right now. It's wonderful, honestly.

The biggest shout-out in the universe to Mia, who accidentally spawned the series of headcanons I'm writing this fic from. She's seriously amazing and tolerates me sending sad thoughts to her at all hours of the night, and is one of the most validating people on the planet. Mia is just... the best.

I've crossposted this to [tumblr](#).

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

As is often the case with trouble, things start simply. Or, perhaps, not simply, for nothing in Fareeha's life could be said to be truly so, not when she navigates the shifting roles of Fareeha/Pharah/Amari, not when she must be arbiter of life and death, not when she lies life partly in the public eye, as all agents of Overwatch do. Nothing in Fareeha's life is simple, but this is simple *enough*. Happiness, not uncomplicated, not untempered, but near enough.

A kiss pressed to Fareeha's temple is what wakes her, Angela's lips on her skin, Strike Team Alpha apparently having returned from their mission while she slept. It is a surprise, but certainly not an unwelcome one; having spent more than two weeks apart, Fareeha is more than happy to see Angela again, to be woken by her, to be in bed with her yet again, whether they will be sleeping or otherwise.

"Guete morge, Angela," says Fareeha, in her best attempt at a Swiss accent. If Angela's reaction is anything to go by—a soft huff of breath on her cheek, the feeling of Angela smiling into her skin—she is not as successful as she would like, but nevertheless, she is rewarded for her effort by a kiss on the lips.

"It's hardly morning Fareeha," Angela replies, and now Fareeha knows for sure that she is amused, can hear the laughter in her voice. Privately, Fareeha is relieved to hear it—the mission had gone well, Angela had indicated as much in their last phone call, but she knows all too well that even successful missions can dredge up unpleasant memories, can reopen wounds one thought long since closed; it is a relief, then, to hear Angela so carefree, a worry gone from Fareeha's mind—but outwardly, she plays along.

"Well then," says she, pretending to ponder her next statement, as if the two of them have not been here many times before, do not know where they are going next, "I suppose I had better stay in bed." When she kisses Angela, punctuating the statement, Fareeha cannot help but notice her chapped lips, an unfortunate side-effect of too much time spent in the field. Somewhat absently, Fareeha adds chapstick to the growing mental list of the things they need to requisition, but she doubts that she will remember come morning, not if things continue as they are. For now, Angela is kissing her with rather more purpose, moving from her position next to Fareeha to lie on top of

her.

When they break for air, Angela smiles a bit cheekily, “Yes, you really ought to stay in bed.

Seven hours’ sleep is recommended after all.” In contrast to the words, Fareeha can feel Angela’s hands wandering to slip under her sleep shirt, moving to palm her breasts. One thing is certain: neither of them will be getting their recommended hours of sleep tonight, for neither has a desire to do so.

Nevertheless, Fareeha continues to play along, “And if I can’t sleep, doctor? I don’t suppose you have any recommendations for things that might help me?” Her left hand she moves to thread in Angela’s hair, tightening her grip as she has learned to do from careful repetition, even if this, her prosthetic arm, cannot feel to judge pressure, and she moves her right hand downwards, grabbing Angela’s ass and pulling her closer, enjoying the feeling of firm muscle beneath her hand.

Angela pulls her head back, cocking it as if she is thinking, her innocent expression belied by the fact that even as she speaks she is rolling one of Fareeha’s nipples in her hand, “Well, there are several options. You could take medication,” she rolls her hips against Fareeha’s as she says this, “but you seem to be stuck in bed.” A pause, another deep kiss, “You could meditate, but,” one hand comes to pause on Fareeha’s left breast, just over to her heart, “between your elevated heartbeat and shallow breathing, I don’t think you’re in the state of mind for it.” Another kiss, Angela sucking on her lower lip to make it yet more sensitive than it is already, then nipping at it just sharply enough that Fareeha gasps. If any part of her had not been fully awake yet, Fareeha knows that it must be now. “I suppose there is nothing else for it, then. You will have to resort to... orgasm.”

With that, Fareeha shifts so that Angela may shift a thigh between her own. She is still in her sleep clothes, but they are thin, and tight, and Angela has had the good sense to strip out of her flight suit and into her own undergarments already; after weeks of separation, they need not worry about sensation not being intense enough. Sometimes, after missions gone awry, one of them will need more, the comfort of skin on skin, but such is not the case now, and this is quicker, easier.

(Fareeha also suspects, although she has no way of knowing for certain, that Angela rather enjoys the naughtiness of clothed sex, another thing on her list to remember for the morning: ask Angela if she specifically enjoys such.)

Angela’s mouth has found its way to the base of Fareeha’s neck, now, sucking hard enough that there will definitely be a mark come morning. With nothing to occupy her own lips, words fall unbidden, the results of thoughts half formed, “I love you,” says she, “I missed you,” and “I’m glad you’re safe,” tumbling out. Fareeha moves her hand upwards, from Angela’s ass to her back, the metal spine cool underneath her fingertips of no concern as she feels the rise and fall of breath: proof of life.

As always, Angela seems to know her mind is drifting, and responds accordingly, biting at Fareeha’s neck and pushing her thigh against Fareeha’s clit with more urgency than usual, her meaning clear: *stay with me*.

So Fareeha focuses, focuses on the feeling of damp fabric rubbing on her thigh, on the pressure of Angela rocking against her core, on the softness of hands which fondle her breasts, on the sharp sting of teeth against the skin of her neck, on Angela, on the feeling of Angela on top of her, on breathing in Angela’s scent, of all the ways in which she and Angela melt into one being.

Fareeha is close, now, as they move faster against one another. Where before sentences escaped her mouth, now there is only *Angela, Angela, Angela*, and her whole universe contracts to their contact, until, until—

Until they are, quite suddenly, interrupted by the sharp buzz of an official Overwatch communicator.

“*Schiesse!*” Angela stops at once, for there may be other medics in the new Overwatch, but at the end of the day, she is the only surgeon on base, and this must be a serious emergency for someone to be calling so late at night.

“Mercy on call,” Fareeha hears her say, and finds herself trying not to groan in frustration. If Angela is needed elsewhere—which is nearly certain—then there will be no recourse for the throbbing between her legs, except by her own hand, which is certainly not how either of them had pictured their night ending.

Neither Angela nor Fareeha questions for moment that the transmission is for Angela. Such is the way of things.

Or, it was, but no longer.

Angela stops still, very suddenly, face entirely expressionless. There is a moment of total silence, not even the hum of someone speaking on the other end of the line.

Immediately, dread grips Fareeha. This is Angela, who is unflappable. Angela who has seen the people she loves torn apart over and over, and over again, and looked at them unflinching, sewing them up, caring for them, only to give them the all clear and watch the cycle begin again. Angela who has stared down the barrel of a gun more times than either of them can count, and returned to fight day after day. Never before has she seen Angela affected so, and the prospect of what must have been said to elicit this reaction terrifies Fareeha.

“Angela?” she asks.

A beat, no response.

“Angela?” she tries again.

Repetition brings success. At once, several expressions pass across Angela’s face, and the spell is broken. “This is for you,” she says by way of explanation, shoving the communicator at Fareeha and then backing up, slowly, never taking her eyes off of the device.

“Pharah reporting,” says Pharah, for this is who she is, now, who she must be. In the back of her mind, Fareeha worries about Angela, about her strange reaction, but the greater part of her mind is Pharah, focusing solely on the mission.

“أهلاً، حبيبتى.”

In an instant, the situation changes yet again. Fareeha knows—has known—that her mother yet lives, but their correspondence has, to this point, been one-sided and by letter only. For Ana to contact her like this, through official communication channels, when before her survival had been secret from all but Fareeha herself, can only mean one thing: she is returning.

Confusion, dread, and concern are displaced at once by something unfathomable. Fareeha cannot remember how it was she thought she might feel, to hear from her mother again, cannot remember any concerns about her mother’s return, cannot remember anything as the past is overshadowed by the *here* and *now*.

For the rest of the conversation, she is in a daze. She feels so much, so suddenly, that it almost as if she can feel nothing at all. Words wash over her, and she can feel hear herself answering, mechanically, as if someone else were speaking. A part of her thinks *this is not how this should*

go, but she cannot place why, cannot understand what she is feeling, and she dismisses the thought—she needs to focus, as best she can; her mother is returning, even if she cannot quite believe it, yet, and she needs to be prepared.

The actual call is short, no longer than perhaps four minutes in duration, but even afterwards she remains in a fog. As she explains the situation to Angela, tells her that *Yes, that was my mother, yes, she is alive, yes, she is coming here—this afternoon, in fact*, she hardly registers the words that are leaving her mouth, hardly can keep herself in present.

Perhaps she ought to be concerned that she feels this way, but it is not entirely unfamiliar to her.

The intense focus, the rest of the world falling away, mind only on the tasks ahead—before there was Pharah, when her mother first died, and she felt she was no longer Amari, name and rank, this is how she felt in battle, struggling to find the strength to do what needed to be done. Why she feels this way now, of all times, she does not know, but she cannot bring herself to care. At the moment, there are larger concerns.

Among those concerns is Angela's reaction to the news. It is hard for Fareeha to read her emotions, in this state, but Angela is very clearly not happy with what is transpiring. She is not frowning, but neither is she smiling. While she does not seem *sad*, (and why would she be?), for a moment, Fareeha gets the distinct impression that she is about to cry. In response, Fareeha reaches out an arm, intending to pull Angela into a comforting hug, only for her to duck away, claiming to need a shower and retreating to their bathroom.

Fareeha notes that she probably ought to shower as well, or at least sleep, but how can she, when there is so much to be done? Ana's old quarters have long since been emptied, they are running low on the tea both she and Fareeha habitually drink, her weaponry is in storage, the team needs to be told that she is alive, and she needs to be added back into the Active Agent Directory, lest Athena's automatic security protocols deny her access to the base... were this any other time, for any other reason, Fareeha might be disappointed about the earlier interruption, might be frustrated by the expectation that she drop everything in her life for the whims of another, might be overwhelmed by how much needs to be done in so little time. At the moment, however, she feels hardly anything, having spent years in anticipation of her mother's return, the situation hardly seems real.

So it is that Fareeha passes the rest of the night, and the earliest hours of the morning, completing tasks with a sort of single-mindedness which is impressive even by her own standards. She works efficiently—perhaps too much so, as before breakfast she is done with all that she can do without the assistance of a more senior agent.

Eating has no appeal this morning; Fareeha hardly tastes her food (and, for once, such is not only the case because it is McCree's turn to cook, although it certainly does not help). What she wants is to be productive, to announce her mother's imminent return and be excused so that she may resume preparations—this time with the help of Winston or another officer—but instead, she must sit, and wait, mindlessly chewing too-hard bread and drinking watery coffee. Overwatch has a debriefing at 07:30 hours every morning, and it would be most appropriate to report such then.

Luckily, no one at breakfast questions her unusually tired and disheveled appearance—even if Lena does avail herself of the opportunity to make lewd implication about it—because Fareeha is not certain that, if asked, she would be able to stop herself from telling the truth. After so long having kept her mother's survival a secret, she can hardly wait to be rid of the burden, and furthermore, she is not really sure she is currently capable of thinking before she speaks. For this reason, she keeps conversation to a minimum, focuses on what she is going to say in the debriefing, and not on present conversation. She hears little, and says less.

In the end, her efforts are for naught, as 76 speaks before her at the meeting, and Fareeha is

evidently not the only person whom her mother had spoken to in her absence—worse, 76 has *seen* Ana, has been able to speak to her directly, when all Fareeha has had by way of contact is a handful of letters across seven years. It is 76, not Fareeha, who is able to tell the team of her mother's survival, it is he who has seen to it that Ana's security clearance be reinstated, he who has been supplying her mother with pilfered nanites for her biotic rifle. This last bit of information has Angela berating Jack, and, mercifully, the argument which ensues gives Fareeha an opportunity to slip out of the meeting without anyone noticing.

It seems there is nothing left to be done, now, but wait. Fareeha has never been as good at waiting as her mother is; it is among the reasons why, despite having inherited Ana's exceptional eyesight and excellent aim, she was never a sniper (the other reason being a desire to be something more than she was at the time—Amari, name and rank, only known with respect to her mother—a desire to be more than a legacy). Had Fareeha her way, there would always be something to occupy her, body and mind, so that she need never be alone with herself at times like this, need never face her own thoughts for too long.

There are, of course, things Fareeha could be doing, unrelated to her mother's imminent arrival, there is always work to be done on the Raptora, is always benefit to putting in time at the gym, but Fareeha does not wish to chance missing her mother's arrival, not after so long apart. So she sits, and waits, and tries not to think. The cold floor of the hangar is hard beneath her knees, and she is almost grateful—pain keeps her mind from drifting too far off course—even if she knows that if she complains of the soreness afterwards Angela will look at her with too-soft eyes and touch her as if she is made of glass while healing the ache (Fareeha has never been sure if this is because Angela does not understand the impulse, or if she knows too well what is happening; Fareeha also has never been sure which explanation is worse).

In the moment, time passes slowly, hour seeming to last an eternity, just as they did when she waited for her mother to return from missions as a child. Each minute seemed an hour, then, but looking back Fareeha can remember almost no details of countless hours spent waiting over the years. Today is much the same. There is nothing, nothing, everything still and calm around her, and quiet, so quiet she is almost tempted to shout, just to see if she can still hear, when suddenly, Fareeha hears the roar of incoming engines, and all at once the memory of time spent waiting is gone, as if it never happened at all, and the present consumes everything.

The others have opted not to join her in greeting her mother here, it seems, have stood back to allow her this reunion as it should be, alone, and Fareeha is not ungrateful, but suddenly, after years apart, there is nothing in her universe but her mother and herself, and Fareeha wishes there were someone—anyone—to distract her mother's gaze from her for just an instant.

Ana has always been strong, in her way, even if she is not so physically imposing as Fareeha herself, and although she is kind and loving, there is something calculating in the way she looks at people which has always made Fareeha feel as if she somehow fails to measure up to an invisible standard. The years have not dulled this strength, nor has the loss of an eye made the sensation of being watched any more pleasant, and quite suddenly Fareeha does not know who she is—does not know if she is Fareeha at all, the child Ana loved, or if she is Amari, the soldier struggling to live up to an impossible standard. She wishes, desperately, that she could be Pharah right now, to show that she has grown strong, that she has become a host unto herself, to be judged and to not be found wanting, to live up to the ideal she has set for herself, proving herself worthy of the tattoo she bears. She wishes, but it is not so.

The moment ought to be one of joy, ought to be loving, ought to be every bit as exciting as the reunions of her youth, but instead it is this, is the mess of Fareeha/Pharah/Amari trying to discover how they fit, and failing, is Ana extending her arms and smiling just a moment too late, is a familiar feeling of failure directed inwards and an entirely unfamiliar feeling directed towards her

mother.

A punch of anger hits her in the gut, and she barely makes it to the bathroom before she is sick.

## Chapter End Notes

And that's all for chapter one! Chapter two hopefully to be here by the end of the weekend, but I've promised my partner not to work on this fic again until Saturday, so who knows when I'll be done.

(Instead of working on this, then, I guess I'll spend Friday filling prompts on tumblr, as I've received two unsolicited, so I might as well solicit some more. [Hit me up.](#))

The chapter title is from the song of the same name, Deadwater by Wet. I felt it appropriate, by which I mean I've cried while listening to it a couple times and thinking about Fareeha and Ana's relationship.

The fic title is again from 1D, as I've decided to just roll with that, this time from the song Fireproof.

Translations are as follows:

Guete Morge - Good morning (Swiss German)

Schiesse - Shit (Swiss/German)

أهلاً ، حبيبتي. - Hello, my darling (Egyptian Arabic)

That's all for now, I guess. Comments are, as always, appreciated, and I'll see everyone sometime in the near future with the next update! Have a good one!

# Island

## Chapter Summary

CW: Internalized ableism

## Chapter Notes

This chapter was delayed because [I was plagiarized](#), and afterwards I felt no motivation to continue producing this, or any work for this pairing. The person who plagiarized me did so using a work which was quite personal, and so I was... very hurt. (Read: my weak ass cried. Repeatedly). BUT I'm back! And there are three people whom I really, really need to thank for that.

First, Skitch (Hinterlands), who commented on the plagiarized fic, leading to the plagiarizer deleting not only the fic but also their account.

Second, [Mimi](#) who is a dear friend, and a talented artist. She finished [a thing I had commissioned from her](#) before the whole incident, which reminded me that I really do love this pairing.

Third, [Dana](#), who said a really, really sweet thing about me totally unexpectedly in the OW Big Bang Discord (Author's Channel) and reminded me that, oh yeah, there are plenty of nice people out there who love this pairing and haven't plagiarized me who *might* want this continued.

So I'm back! Hooray! I'm still pretty bummed but I figure posting won't make me feel *worse*, and if anything might make me feel better.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

When Fareeha dreams, it is one of two ways. In the first, it is like she is watching a film, able to witness the events of her life unfold but unable to intervene, forced to watch over and over the deaths of comrades in arms, the last breaths of civilians she failed to save, the accusing eyes of those she has killed; in these dreams, she is helpless, is frozen, is a spectator of her own greatest failures. In the second, she is treated only to impressions, the sounds, the smells, the sensations of times long gone—truthfully, these dreams are often not much better than the others, serving only to remind her of that which is lost to time. Tonight, her dreams are of the latter variety, where all she knows is the scent of jasmine, the warmth of the sun on her back, the sound of a barking laugh. The laugh she knows (her mother's) and the sun could be any time, any place, but the jasmine eludes her, and she wonders what made her mother laugh so, whether it was kind or cruel. If only she could remember the jasmine, she could place the memory, could have some context and feel—something. Something other than the confusion which now hounds her.

Jasmine, sunshine, laughter. Jasmine, sunshine, laughter. Egypt? Gibraltar? Listen again. Another laugh, in the background, a man's. Whose? If she knew, if she knew....



She is close, so, *so* close to remembering, when the warmth on her back turns suddenly to ice, and she jolts awake. At some point while Fareeha was sleeping, Angela must finally have made her way to bed, for it is her cold form (always, always cold), so fragile looking as she sleeps, which has pressed up against Fareeha, creating the chill which woke her.

For a moment, Fareeha considers staying in bed, lying in until Angela wakes, taking her day slowly, but how can she? Fareeha needs to stay active, to keep moving, to occupy herself somehow from the thoughts which hound her, from the undirected anger which sticks in her mind and will not let her go, like a headache, throbbing at the base of her skull.

(Besides which, she does not know if her staying would be welcome. Since her mother's return a week prior, she and Angela have been as two ships passing in the night; they have seen little of one another, and spoken even less. Partially, this is Fareeha's own fault, as she has been waking earlier and earlier to go train, and falling into bed before Angela has left the lab for the night, yet she still worries that perhaps she is being avoided. It is true that she has not been in the mood to speak, and Angela likely has picked up on that, but she cannot silence the voice in the back of her mind that tells her that Angela is avoiding her for reasons she cannot name.)

So Fareeha rises, despite the early hour, pushes herself out of bed and onto still-sore legs, and readies herself to head to the gym. As she dresses, she remembers summer afternoons in her childhood spent outside, the feeling of sunshine. Filling her water bottle, she remembers her mother's laughter, remembers being chided to *stay hydrated*, remembers fumbling with pronouncing the word 'dehydrated' and the chuckle which had followed. She brushes her teeth, paste smelling of mint... she cannot place the jasmine, still, and she shakes her head to forget.

(How can she forget that which she has already forgotten, or which never was?)

In the gym, there is nothing but silence (no laughter), cold light from fluorescent rods, and the smell of stale sweat. That it should stand empty at this hour is hardly unusual—most of the time, Fareeha is the only one who trains so early, and until now, she has only done so when Angela was away and could not help her to chase away her demons somewhat less productively—but once in a blue moon, Aleks will find herself haunted at the same time, and the two of them will do battle with one another, in place of what troubles them. Fareeha wishes she could do so now, but Aleks is not here, and sparring will have to wait. Instead, she avails herself of a rowing machine, turns to repetition to dull the mind, instead of fighting to fill it.

It is enough, it must be.

*Stroke*, she cannot remember, now, what her mother's perfume smelled like.

*Stroke*, Ana wore it only rarely before, and has not had occasion to since her return.

'*Stroke*, could it have been jasmine?

*Stroke*, might it have smelled as it did in her dream?

*Stroke*, perhaps it did, or perhaps, perhaps....

*Stroke*, perhaps it means nothing at all.

*Stroke*, perhaps she never smelled jasmine on such a day.

*Stroke*, perhaps her mother never laughed in the warmth of the sun.

*Stroke*, Fareeha certainly does not remember it.

*Stroke*, perhaps it is a dream, in the other sense.

*Stroke*, just something she conjured up, a childhood she wanted.

*Stroke*, what was it like to be a child?

*Stroke*, she hardly remembers, now, so detached is Fareeha/Pharah/Amari from who she once was.

*Stroke*, how many days did she pass, the sun on her back, her mother at her side?

*Stroke*, it cannot have been many, and yet she finds that she remembers none at all.

*Stroke*, what lasts are impressions, none concrete.

*Stroke*, how many days has she forgotten?

*Stroke*, how many memories has she lost?

*Stroke*, how many times has she smelt jasmine on the air, heard laughter in the distance?

*Stroke*, how many, how many, how many....

*Stroke*, how many strokes?

A pause.

Fareeha drinks, catches her breath, shakes her head.

In coming to the gym, Fareeha sought to clear her mind, and instead she is doing the opposite, is creating for herself more worries. *Pathetic*, a part of her thinks, and she hears it in her mother's voice.

(Never has Ana spoken to her that way; but then, Ana has never needed words to convey a message clearly, and it has been felt. Real or imagined? Memory or dream? Regardless, Fareeha feels it just the same, feels the sting of shame.)

Anger, again, hot and bright, unlike the dull aching warmth of exercise, unlike the coziness of fatigue. Perhaps this is her problem, a failure to address what truly troubles her. What cares she for jasmine?

Laps. Laps are better for thinking than rowing, and she is less likely to push herself too far running than she is rowing. Normally, she runs with Angela, as the thin atmosphere they fly in requires good cardio, but Angela has been busy in her lab, lately, has been too preoccupied to run, too preoccupied to sleep, too preoccupied for conversation. Distant, where normally she is never quite out of arm's reach. Running would not bring her closer, would not close the gap, but still, Fareeha hesitates. If running alone will not bring her closer, then it stands to reason that it must push her further away.

She cannot risk that. Better to allow herself only the short, choppy thoughts which exist between strokes. That way, her mind cannot wander too far, and neither can she.

*Stroke*, the largest problem, Fareeha thinks, is anger.

*Stroke*, she is not, now, nor has she ever been, an angry person.

*Stroke*, indignance, she has known.

*Stroke*, jealousy, she has nearly allowed to consume her.

*Stroke*, vengeance, however, she has never sought.

*Stroke*, only justice, and even that she has tempered.

*Stroke*, why, then, is she angry now?

*Stroke*, it is not the deception.

*Stroke*, if deception had angered her, she would have been furious upon receiving her mother's letter.

*Stroke*, if deception had angered her, she might have crumpled it, discarded it, pushed all thoughts of her mother aside.

*Stroke*, did she not, instead, weep?

*Stroke*, was she not moved?

*Stroke*, never once did Fareeha feel anger for being deceived.

*Stroke*, rather, she was immediately grateful, had thanked Allah for her mother's life.

*Stroke*, no, Fareeha cannot resent her mother for deception.

*Stroke*, in fact, she understands the need for it.

*Stroke*, understands feeling trapped in a situation.

*Stroke*, understands thinking that there must be a better way.

*Stroke*, understands looking down at bloodied hands and wondering what she has done,

*Stroke*, what she has allowed herself to do,

*Stroke*, what she has allowed herself to become,

*Stroke*, understands in a way that is not knowing.

*Stroke*, not intimately, not by experience,

*Stroke*, (not that she will admit),

*Stroke*, but in a way that is bone-deep.

*Stroke*, Fareeha has seen, and understands.

*Stroke*, what she does not understand, is how it could have been necessary for her mother to run, if she has now returned.

*Stroke*, it may not have been painless, her return, but it cannot have been too great a hardship either.

*Stroke*, Fareeha has known her mother when she is of two minds,

*Stroke*, Fareeha has known her mother's pain,

*Stroke*, (or she has come as near to doing so as any child can know the burdens of their parent)

*Stroke*, Fareeha has *known*, and knows, and what she sees is not that which she wishes to see, is something altogether different.

*Stroke*, if it was so easy for Ana to return,

*Stroke*, (and it seems to have been)

*Stroke*, did she ever truly need to leave?

*Stroke*, Fareeha thinks not.

*Stroke*, this has not hurt her mother.

*Stroke*, instead, it is Fareeha who must suffer.

*Stroke*, where is the justice in that?

*Stroke*, therein lies the problem.

Fareeha stops rowing, sitting frozen on the machine; for a moment, everything is seen in perfect clarity, and she *understands*, which is rare enough. While she knows herself well in that she knows her physical limits, knows her battlefield capabilities, knows what she believes and why she believes it, Fareeha has never been well in touch with herself emotionally, has not always been able to discern why it is what she is feeling and why it is she is feeling it. For one perfect moment, Fareeha feels truly in touch with herself, is self-assured somewhere that is not the field of battle, feels capable as she does as Pharah.

Unfortunately, there is a price to be paid for this awareness, and it is guilt. Now that Fareeha knows why it is she is angry, she finds it unacceptable.

For the past week, Fareeha has been trying to understand why it is she was angry at her mother's return, when she feels that she ought to be glad for it, but in truth, she *is* happy to see her mother returned, safe and well, and is happy to once again be in the presence of a woman she loves and admires. In this regard, she feels her emotional reaction to be entirely appropriate and in line with her own expectations. A child *ought* to be happy that their parent lives, ought to be happy to see their mother returned from the dead, ought to be happy to be in her situation. Indeed, if any of the other members of her team were in her situation, they would likely be overwhelmed with joy.

It is not, however, as simple as her mother merely reentering her life. The reality of the situation is that Fareeha has defined herself throughout her life with regard to her mother. Always, Ana Amari has been the compass by which her own daughter orients herself, has been the greatest defining factor in her life, casting an impossibly large shadow, even if unintentionally.

As a child, all Fareeha heard from others was how *great* her mother was, what a *hero* she was, to everyone, and like all children, Fareeha looked up to her mother, and wanted to become like her; Ana was a constant source of inspiration, and, due to language barrier and a need to relocate often to new watchpoints, was one of few people with whom Fareeha had any close relationship. Then, as a young woman, as Amari, name and rank, she existed in opposition to her mother, existed to prove that she could be as good, could be better even, than the figure whose shadow she could not escape; when others heard her name, and thought of her mother, Amari was only pushed further, driven to become more, to be the ideal soldier, and were it not for this, she might never have succeeded as much as she did. Then, Pharah was born, in her Raptora, a defender of the innocent, a protector of justice, whose sought to continue her mother's legacy following her (un)death;

Pharah was born in the year she thought Ana to be dead, and took for her callsign her mother's nickname for her as an homage, tattooed herself in the same fashion as her mother as a sign of deference to tradition she had long rebuked. Even when Ana revealed herself to be alive, Pharah did all that she could in order to preserve a family legacy, worked in honor of her mother.

Now, Fareeha does not know whom she is, does not know how to orient herself. With Ana returned, is there a need for Pharah, is there a legacy left to secure? When the team compares her to her mother, should she respond as Amari, name and rank, insisting that she is her own woman, as capable as ever? Should she speak to her mother as Fareeha, even though she has long since grown past the point of seeing her mother as a flawless being, as somehow superhuman? Around her mother, how can she be any of those people? How can she reconcile her identities with her current situation? Her relationship with her mother has changed, *she* has changed, and has yet to discover how everything fits.

Were she nearly anyone else, Fareeha knows she would not have this problem. For the most part, her comrades in arms seem to have no issue with reconciling the different aspects of themselves, have no trouble integrating aspects of their own identities into one being. Lùcio is Lùcio, always, whether he is out in the field, on the stage performing, or at home at Watchpoint: Gibraltar. Never does he falter, never is his identity in question. Angela may be three people in one, may be Angela, Dr. Ziegler, and Mercy, but she is all three at once, somehow, is able to maintain one identity, or flow so seamlessly between aspects of herself that Fareeha has never seen the transition disturb her. Fareeha wishes she were like them, wishes she could be one person, whole, not the fragmented thing she is, with all the trouble that causes.

What Fareeha wants, has wanted, above all else, is to be sure of herself, her identity, now and always. Her mother's return has jeopardized that, has disturbed the uneasy peace she has created within herself, and so she is angry, and unfairly so. Whatever Ana has done, regardless of whether or not faking her own death and hiding such from her own daughter was right, she does not deserve this, does not deserve Fareeha's misplaced anger.

For her anger *is* misplaced. Were she anyone else, the problem would not exist, and thus it is unfair to Ana that she must suffer for it, unfair that her daughter is incapable of defining herself outside of the context of their relationship, and therefore has grown angry when she should be joyous. It does not do to punish her mother for something that is not her fault, even if Fareeha wishes to do so.

Hence, her guilt. Fareeha believes in justice, in fairness, quite strongly, and this is unquestionably unfair of her. It has made her a hypocrite, and is responsible for her hurting someone she loves. Regardless of how she feels, she must find some way to repress this feeling, must force herself to focus on the good, so that *she* can be good. In time, she will find her place, will learn how to exist within the new context of their relationship, she need only suppress her anger until then, need only quiet the demons inside herself for so long. This shall pass, and she will feel foolish for it later, should she lash out in anger now—indeed, she feels foolish already.

If there were someone to confide in, Fareeha might feel better, might have an outlet for her frustration, but how can she? As she has established, any of the others would feel blessed to be in her place, would gladly have their own parents return from the dead, would want a mother who loves them as much as Ana loves her. To confide in anyone else would be deeply unfair to them, would be to spit in the face of their own pain. Even Angela, empathetic to a fault, could not understand this, Fareeha does not think. For all that Angela does her best to support Angela, how could she bear to hear this, when the loss of her own parents has caused her so much pain? The return of Ana seems to have bothered her more than enough already, and Fareeha does not wish to risk compounding that injury; Angela deserves better than that.

Yet the fact remains that Fareeha must speak about this, must do something, as things cannot continue as they have been. She cannot continue to miss sleep, to sneak around her mother, to withdraw from the others. On the field, she needs to be in peak condition, and needs to be able to rely upon all of her teammates, needs for them to be able to rely on her in turn. If she is tired, or not communicating with them, that is not possible. She does not wish to risk jeopardizing the mission, or her comrades, because of her problems. That is unacceptable to her.

There is only one solution, then, to Fareeha's problem. She must speak with the one person who could possibly understand her position, the one person who could hear her admit to thinking and feeling such ugly things, and love her still, the one person whom she has always relied upon above all others.

She must speak to her mother.

## Chapter End Notes

Those of you who have read all of the Plighted Hands Verse fics so far have now read over 50 pages of fanfic in this verse (you've read 62 pages, actually, and 18.5k words)! Holy shit.

The working title for this was "Fareeha Feels A Feel," and I think that continues to be appropriate.

The chapter title comes from the song Island, by Wet. I listened to it while outlining and writing this chapter.

Also, I typed the word "stroke" so many times it no longer looks real.

Sorry to anyone who has actually used a rowing machine, my disabled ass hasn't and honestly, I am only a Fitness Ally insofar as I love buff ladies, so apologies if I got anything wrong.

As always, feel free to drop me a line on [tumblr](https://www.tumblr.com/), and commenting will earn you my eternal gratitude (or at least make me feel good about myself).

Hope y'all are all doing well! See ya next time.

# It's All In Vain

## Chapter Summary

CW: Internalized Ableism

## Chapter Notes

Born To Type  
Fic Is A Fuck  
Write Em All 1989

Cross-posted to [tumblr](#).

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Ana's second week on base is, if anything, harder for Fareeha than her first, although not for the same reasons as the previous week was difficult; now that she knows what it is that is angering her, now that she has some semblance of an understanding of her problem, it is easy enough for her to push down her emotions, and focus on other things. Other things such as her current source of frustration: she cannot, for whatever reason, catch her mother alone. In fact, it is hard enough for her to find Ana at all. For a woman whose influence is so omnipresent in Fareeha's life, she is remarkably good at making herself scarce when she wishes to do so.

On the rare occasions Fareeha *does* find her mother, she is always with someone else, always otherwise engaged in conversation, and she manages to find a reason to excuse herself before Fareeha can attempt to engage her one-on-one. It is baffling, and Fareeha cannot understand her motivations at all.

For what reason would Ana hide from her own daughter? What could Fareeha possibly have done, to become so repulsive to her own mother? Does Ana hate whom she has become so much?

*You are a pale imitation of your mother, a voice in her head tells her, of course she would not want to be seen with you, you are an embarrassment.*

But that is not true, and Fareeha knows it to be so. Even if she has not always felt able to live up to her mother's legacy, even if she does not feel that way now, there is no reason Ana would speak to her that way. Ana has never been anything but proud of what she has accomplished, has never belittled her achievements. While she may have disapproved, at times, of Fareeha's interests, she did her best to be supportive, always.

*Then it is because you have disobeyed her, have betrayed her wishes, made a mockery of her sacrifice for you by putting your own life at risk, the voice insists.*

This is far harder for Fareeha to dismiss. After all, did her mother's letter, their sole communication for seven years, not emphasize that war was not the life Ana had wanted for her daughter? Surely, though, this would be a disappointment, if anything, and not worthy of disgust

and avoidance. Surely, Ana would confront Fareeha about this, attempt to dissuade her from battle, if this were the source of the tension between them. Disapproval is not cause for avoidance, merely chastisement.

*Then it is because you are broken, the voice suggests, because you are not able to endure battle, as she did, are not able to stand tall after having killed. You may have survived battle, but her daughter did not, does not. Are you not a different person from Pharah, a different person from Amari? Are you not shattered? How could any mother bear to see this, to see their own child so broken.*

To this, Fareeha finds she has no rebuttal. To think of her own mindset, of the thing she has become, fragmented beyond repair, not a whole person but so many pieces, is not pleasant, even for her. What must it look like from the outside? How could Ana look upon her, see the thing she has become, and not shrink away? How could anyone?

Of course her mother does not want to see her, of course her mother cannot stand to be near her; she is a reminder that, for all that Ana sought to protect her daughter, she could not succeed, could not protect the child she gave everything for. All of her efforts, for naught, all the lives she took, and war still killed Fareeha, is still killing her, in so many different ways. Will continue to do so, if no one stops her—and who could?

To be reminded of such a failure, to see one's best intentions be for naught, to see one's failure—for her mother did fail, if her goal was truly to save Fareeha from warfare—how could it not chafe? How could it not wound her? It is only natural that Ana turn away from Fareeha, only natural that she be repulsed. Who does not find their failure abject? Who does not shrink back from the abject? How could any stare in the face abjection, embodied, and not flinch, not turn away?

Fareeha understands, then, why it is that her mother would not wish to see her, but she cannot allow this to continue, must speak to her mother eventually. In total, Ana has been at Watchpoint: Gibraltar for two weeks, and that is more than enough time for her to have been cleared to return to the field, more than enough time for Angela to have given her a physical and for her full security clearance to be restored. There is no reason that she and her mother might not be sent on a mission together tomorrow, and to be out in the field together when they cannot even be in the same room as one another would be a mistake, a potentially deadly one. Things need to change, Fareeha needs to change them. She will not risk her life, her teammates' lives, her friends lives, over something so insignificant as her *feelings*. There is naught to do but attempt to resolve the issue, and the only way Fareeha can see of potentially doing that is by speaking, even if she does not wish to do so, does not wish to hear what she is sure will be a rebuke, or a confirmation of her fears. Enough of tact, of trying to wait politely until a discussion is finished; if she must be rude to initiate this conversation, she will be. (After all, she has naught to lose. Already, her mother does not want to see her, already, her mother is disgusted by what it is she has become; why should she not be seen as disrespectful, as well?)

However, determination will not solve all of Fareeha's problems. In order to force a discussion, she still must *find* her mother, which she knows well enough will not be easy. The watchpoint is large, built in Overwatch's golden years, made to accommodate more than 1000 personnel, as opposed to the group of less than twenty who currently reside there; it would be easy enough for anyone to hide there, should they choose to, and as one of the foremost snipers in the world, Ana is used to choosing places to hide, and would have no problem concealing herself from Fareeha if she so desired. There is only one way Fareeha will be guaranteed to find her mother; she must do this thing she hates most, and wait.

Only one of the many kitchens of the watchpoint is currently in use by the team, and so



eventually, no matter how far afield Ana may be hiding, she will need to return to it in order to eat. Leaving the base in order to get food is not an option; everyone has strict orders to not to do so in order to avoid detection. If they are found, Winston has declared that they will return to Watchpoint: Grand Mesa, which is unpleasant owing both to its high altitude and drastic temperature changes. No one particularly wants to be stationed there, save perhaps for McCree, and they have all been extraordinarily careful to avoid detection. Ever the soldier, Ana will obey orders and stay on base. Eventually, she *will* return to the kitchen.

Knowing that waiting is necessary does not make doing so much easier for Fareeha, and she finds her thoughts wandering too often to her dream from a week before. It had been so vivid, then, so clear to her when and where she was, but now she cannot place it, no matter how hard she tries. It feels important, somehow, and surely so strong a memory must be so, yet every time she grasps for it, it eludes her. What does jasmine remind her of? When has she smelt it before? Where was she then? Why does it seem so important?

Normally, Fareeha might speak about this to Angela, might confide in her, but Angela is avoiding her nearly as persistently as her mother is. Or, Fareeha suspects Angela is avoiding her. She does not know for certain, as Angela can become quite absorbed in her research from time to time, and it is distinctly possible that Angela is merely quite close to a breakthrough, and therefore busy, as opposed to taking great pains to minimize their contact. The fact that, despite being away during the daytime, Angela still finds her way into their bed each night supports this hypothesis, and certainly Fareeha can think of nothing she has said or done that might warrant Angela's ire, but somehow she cannot quite shake the feeling that they have not just been missing each other, that this must be in some way intentional.

If her own mother cannot bear to be around her, why should anyone else wish to be in her company? Perhaps her reaction to Ana—her anger, misplaced—was only the last straw, or perhaps Angela had truly never noticed before just how *wrong* Fareeha is, and Angela has decided that they can no longer be together, that she no longer wants them to be together, and is merely waiting for a better time to end things. It would not be hard for Fareeha to believe such, not now. Not when she is in such a state as she is.

After all, has she not—

A sound draws her attention, the breaking of a seal that accompanies the opening of a refrigerator, and she snaps to attention. There is her mother, already leaving, quickly as she came, not even a word exchanged between them.

"Wait!" she calls out, a touch too loudly for the setting. Were she younger, her mother might be chastising her for not using her inside voice; as it stands, Ana merely freezes in place, doing nothing to acknowledge Fareeha, but making no move to leave either. It is progress. "We need to talk," says she, and is thankful that her voice stays strong, even when she feels so very, very weak and small.

"We do," Ana replies, and Fareeha wonders when her voice became so brittle, when it became so sharp. It is not the voice of Fareeha's childhood, but nor is it entirely unrecognizable. The result of age, Fareeha realizes, and it is strange, to think of her mother as old now. Even before her death, she was aging, hair gone grey and skin beginning to wrinkle, but now, it shows more than before. Fareeha moves to stand beside her, and realizes suddenly how very small she seems—it is frightening.

"Well?" Ana's voice ends Fareeha's contemplation, and she realizes that whatever else may have changed, her mother still has a *strong* voice, one which commands respect and attention. "Surely you don't want to be having this conversation in the kitchen?"

She is right; Fareeha tells her so, and leads her mother to the quarters she had been assigned when she first joined Overwatch. Now, she is living with Angela, and has no use for them, but she knows they will be empty, knows that she and her mother will not be disturbed while they converse therein.

There is only one chair in the room, as per regulations, and Fareeha takes it. Undoubtedly, it would be more polite to allow her mother to speak, but she suspects she will need it. Her mother is unbothered by this, apparently, and sits on the floor, food set on the ground before her, comfortable perhaps owing to her years as a sniper, sitting or lying nearly anywhere, in or on anything.

(From the way Ana sits, on her calves, Fareeha is more reminded of prayer, but she dare not think of what her mother may now pray for, oriented not towards Mecca but towards her child.)

"I—" Fareeha starts, and stops. How to begin? What can she say? And how like her to begin with herself, when this is between the two of them, when this must surely hurt them both. No wonder no one wishes to be around her. How selfish. But how else to start. You? How accusing. We? They are not unified.

Her mother waits, and does so with ease. The same hands which have taken so many lives now pick apart a blackberry, nodule by nodule, as she eats. Fareeha envies her patience, her calm, wishes that she could be the same.

"Have you been avoiding me?" she asks, at last, and hates how desperate she sounds. How like a child, unable to understand that her mother has needs and wants beyond herself. Perhaps her mother has not been avoiding her, and this is all a misunderstanding, she must sound so pathetic, must—

"Yes," says Ana, one eye meeting Fareeha's own. There it is, the thing Fareeha most feared hearing; her own mother does not wish to see her, her own mother finds her wanting—but Ana is not finished speaking, yet. "I have. I thought that was what you wanted."

"What I *wanted*?" she hates the way her voice cracks as she speaks. Who is she now? Not Pharah, certainly, not weak as she is, not Amari, name and rank, more a soldier than a person, but not Fareeha, either, not the same woman who just three weeks ago was certain of who she was, and happy with it, not the same woman who knew her mother loved her, even if from a distance. Whoever she is now is uncertain, is needy in a way she is not, and wants not to be her mother but to please her, to have once again her mother's approval and love. "How could you think that I did not want to see my own mother?"

*You didn't*, she thinks, and tries to shove the thought down, traitorous as it is. *You were avoiding her, also, in the beginning. You misdirected your own anger onto your mother, blamed her, and risked the happiness of both of you as a result of your immaturity.*

Fareeha almost, almost apologizes, then and there, but her mother speaks first, "I am sorry, حبيبتي," and now they do not look one another in the eye, they have both turned their heads. "I thought.. I do not know. I have hurt you, and I am sorry. You must believe this, if nothing else: I have only ever wanted to protect you, have only ever desired to keep you from hurting."

A pause. Fareeha should speak, but finds she cannot, words stuck in her throat.

Ana continues, "I wanted to shield you, and in doing so I've caused you pain. I didn't—it was never my intention."

Now, Fareeha finds her voice, cannot bear to hear her mother continue. If all Ana wants is to see

her well, and whole, as she says, then she cannot bear to hear anymore. Her mother must not know what she has become, must not know how truly wounded Fareeha is, how she has fractured herself, if not her bones. For her mother to discover this would only make the situation worse, would make her into something her mother truly could not love, a reminder only of failure and regret, so Fareeha *cannot* let this conversation continue as it is. Above all else, she cannot lose what love Ana still holds for her, no matter under what pretenses.

As she is, Ana cannot love her, it is clear that Fareeha was right about that much, but perhaps, if Ana loves the person she believes her daughter to be, that will be sufficient. Having her mother's love, even if conditionally, is all she seems to want in this moment, and she will not risk losing it.

"I forgive you," she says, and thinks *There is nothing to forgive*, "It's alright, mother," and she moves to stand before Ana, reaches one hand down to pull her up; it is her prosthetic, and she regrets in an instant that decision, wonders if this, too, will hurt her mother further.

However, Ana says not a word about it—maybe she does not notice, or thinks it is not the time. Instead, she allows herself to be stood up, and moves to hug Fareeha. For all that she has grown older, looks frailer like this, crying as she is, body twisted by age, her grip is tight where she holds on to Fareeha, is as strong as she ever was. It is hard to think of her as weak, even in this moment of vulnerability, crying in her daughter's arms, so fierce is her hug, the force of her love, her desire to protect communicated better by her touch than it could ever be in words.

Distantly, Fareeha wonders if she, too, should be crying, should weep for what she has lost, or what she has gained, but she finds she cannot, is unwilling to risk seeming anything other than whole and strong in front of her mother in this moment. There will be time enough to cry later, she tells herself; in this moment she must be strong.

"**أنا بـجـبـك**," her mother tells her, and Fareeha believes, in that moment, that she means it, believes that her mother could love her, even as she is. But then her mother breaks the hug, steps, back wipes a tear from her eye.

"I'm sorry, Fareeha," and this time, her voice is stronger, in the way Fareeha remembers from her childhood, one constant as she moved from place to place, "I should not lean on you so. It should be I comforting you... but you have grown so strong." Ana's gaze is fixed somewhere in the distance, memory clouding her vision. "In all these years, you haven't needed me once. I suppose you're truly an adult, now."

*No*, thinks Fareeha, *no, no, no*. She is not strong, not like Ana thinks she is, she *has* needed her mother—has done everything with respect to her—and she needs her now, but how can she say such? How can she say anything, when her mother thinks her strong? To admit that she needs her mother is to risk discovery, to risk being revealed for what she is, not one whole, strong, daughter, but pieces of one.

She must say something, must correct this, must not lie to her mother so.

She cannot say anything, lest she lose everything.

She will not lose her mother again.

## Chapter End Notes

that's wild.

I'm still in a good mood, though, because of a tumblr message I got this morning lmao. It's good to know that the authors you like like your work, too. Sweet, sweet validation.

Chapter title is another Wet song, because consistency is key, or something.

Translations:

حبيبتي - My darling

أنا بحبك - I love you.

Also shout-out to Skitch for doing wordsprints with me, you're the best dude.

Thanks to everyone, by the way, for the lovely comments last chapter. Warms the cockles of my heart.

I hope y'all are doing well, and that you continue to do well. If you're not doing well, I hope this makes your day a little better. Y'all make my day better.

See ya next time!

# Weak

## Chapter Summary

CW: Internalized Ableism

## Chapter Notes

"Yikes" but with the "ike" part pronounced like the "ike" in "Nike."

[Crossposted to tumblr.](#)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Another week passes, this one much like the week previous, in terms of Fareeha's mood. Although she and her mother are now on speaking terms, little enough has changed for her. It is nice to be able to speak with Ana, to know that her mother was only avoiding her in an attempt to be kind, but she cannot shake the feeling that if her mother knew just how broken she actually was, things would be different, cannot shake the feeling that she is not good enough, is not well enough, to be what her mother wants.

It stings to speak to her mother and to know that their relationship is built upon a falsehood, to know that there are indelible truths about her very being which jeopardize her relationships with those whom she loves. Like many others, what Fareeha wants is acceptance, to be loved for all that she is, and she does not think she *can* find that with her mother, not now. If she knew someone else accepted her as she was, it might be easier, might make the risk of losing one of her few close relationships worthwhile, but she does not know this, is not certain of her relationships with anyone.

After all, Angela is not speaking to her, or, rather, is *speaking* to her, when it is unavoidable, is maintaining that all is well between them, but this is clearly not the case; Angela is still *avoiding* her, she is certain, is putting distance between them, for reasons Fareeha cannot fathom.

Before now, she might have told Angela about the tension between herself and her mother, might have confessed to being what she is, to living how she does, in pieces, as different people.

There is evidence enough to suggest that Angela has some awareness of the situation, that she has some implicit knowledge of what is happening to Fareeha. Does Angela not treat her differently when she is Pharah? Does Angela not know that there is something she needs, then, that Fareeha does not? Has Angela not looked Pharah in the eyes, and told her that she is loved, and then hours later done the same for Fareeha?

And yet, how can she speak of this now to Angela, who has taken such pains to avoid her presence since Ana's return? How can she confide in anyone?

Fareeha knows that she behaved strangely following her mother's phone call, that she was all and none of her selves, and Angela had left the room so swiftly, has not looked back since. It is not inconceivable that Angela, while aware on some level of what Fareeha/Pharah/Amari is, of who

she is, was not fully aware of the implications of her being, did not understand the whole situation. Perhaps, seeing her lover truly for the first time, Angela was frightened off, and has only put off ending things between them for the sake of politeness; it would be in terrible form to leave Fareeha (and Pharah, and Amari, name and rank) during a time of crisis, with her mother only just returned to her. Angela is far too kind to leave someone when they need her, is too conditioned from her time in medicine to abandon the suffering. Is not Fareeha the suffering?

The thought that Angela might only choose to continue their relationship out of pity is a terrible one, but once it occurs, Fareeha cannot shake it. When she trains, allows herself to become Pharah, it stays with her, in the back of her mind. Only Amari, name and rank, might not be bothered, angry as she has ever been, but Fareeha is unwilling to become her, unwilling even if to do so might lend her the strength she needs to confront Angela, to ask what is happening between them.

So nothing changes. In the morning, Fareeha rises, Angela slumbering at her side, having slipped into the room at some point while Fareeha slept. She goes to the gym, she trains, tries to forget her problems, with little success. Her mind wanders to warm afternoons of her childhood, when she had none of the problems she does at present, when things were simple and she was certain that she was loved. She eats, she trains some more, she meets with her mother in the evenings. *We have much to catch up on, Fareeha*, her mother had said, and she was not wrong, and so they while away the later hours of the day in conversation, trying to make up for time lost. In seven years, much has changed, even if, when her mother laughs, it sounds just the same as it ever did, just the same as she remembers. When her mother retires, for she always leaves first, Fareeha is left with no company but her thoughts. Nothing, then, can distract her from her worries, from her own feelings of inadequacy and fears of abandonment, and she tries, and fails to find something else, something to remove her from the present, away from where she sits, alone, in she and Angela's empty room.

*The scent of jasmine*; try as Fareeha might, she still cannot place it, cannot discover from whence the memory comes. Always, it moves just beyond her reach. Why should a flower be so significant? At a time such as this, it ought to be the furthest thing from her mind, but it tears her from thoughts of the present, from fears of the future, and so she supposes she should be grateful. And she is grateful, it is only that—

The sound of a door, cracking open; no knock preceded it, no voice called out—Fareeha was not so lost in her thoughts as to have missed that—so it can only be one person who is here.

*Angela.*

It surprises Fareeha, and for a moment she is saddened, to think that it now surprises her when the woman she lives with enters their shared quarters—it never used to be so, and it should never have been so—but sadness is quickly replaced by hope.

*Hope is weakness*, the part of her which is Amari, name and rank, reminds her. *Hope will get you killed*. It never used to be that Pharah and Amari bubbled so close to the surface of Fareeha's thoughts, never used to be that she need worry about their words supplanting her own, but she is lost, is not wholly herself, has not been for weeks now. Sooner or later, one of them will speak in her place. Sooner or later, she will adjust to the intrusion.

"Fareeha?" Angela's voice is almost timid, in a way she rarely is, in a way she has not been since before they began living together, in a way which Fareeha knows she hates. Angela wishes to be strong, always, wishes to be in control of situations, and to know all the answers. War has taught both of them that there is no room for weakness. Even with one another, showing vulnerability is difficult, is a sign of a trust which neither of them gives easily.

Is it on purpose? A concession, maybe, or a way of convincing Fareeha to let her own guard down? But no, Angela would not do that, would not betray Fareeha so, would not risk all that they have built. Instead, it seems more likely that Angela is only doing so to show how much she, too, is dreading this conversation, the degree to which the growing chasm between them has made her as unsure as it has Fareeha.

Or, she could be entirely genuine. It is possible that Angela, too, is not entirely in control. Has not Fareeha been shaken by her mother's return? Has she not lost control she normally holds so tightly to? It may be the same for Angela, although Fareeha cannot imagine why.

"Schäri?" and now, Angela sounds even more uncertain, "Are you busy?"

Belatedly, Fareeha realizes that she never did anything to acknowledge Angela's entrance. Still, she is afraid to speak, afraid to be put in a situation like the one from before, afraid that she will, yet again, come away from a conversation only more lost and hurting than she was before.

Instead of speaking, she nods. Luckily, Pharah is reticent enough, when shaken, that this will not bother Angela, will not seem too out of the ordinary, will not be misinterpreted as standoffishness.

"Before I say anything more," Angela says, sitting next to Fareeha on their bed, shoulder to shoulder, not looking towards her, but instead focusing on the wall before them, "I need you to know that this is not easy for me to say. I know that it is no excuse, for treating you as I have. I know that Ana returning could not have been easy for you, and I should have been there to help you with it, rather than hiding away in my office. If I were a better person, I would have been at your side. However, I am not, and I was not."

A pause. From the corner of her eye, Fareeha can see Angela's hands twist in her lap, knuckles white. Still, she says nothing, cannot bring herself to say anything. If Angela believes *herself* to be bad, then what is Fareeha? What value has a broken thing, only certain of her place when she kills?

After a deep breath, Angela continues, "I wanted to help you, Fareeha, a part of me did. But I was afraid, afraid that I would hurt you, instead." *Did she think that avoiding Fareeha had spared her any pain?* "I was wrong. Or, I was right in that I would have hurt you, but I have realized that I must have hurt you either way. I should have known better, especially after... before... but you must understand, none of this comes as easily to me as it does to you. I did not grow up with a mother, did not grow up with my peers, did not ever truly learn what it is to be in a relationship, to love someone."

Another deep breath, and Fareeha hums in acknowledgement. Now, she is less afraid of speaking, knows that Angela would forgive her for saying much in this moment, but she wants to hear the end of what it is Angela has to say, wants to know how it is Angela hopes to justify what is, evidently, to her own mind a great offense. She will not speak until Angela is done.

"That's precisely why this has happened. I was—I am—jealous." *Jealous? Of Fareeha's relationship with her mother? What is there to be jealous of?* "It's selfish and juvenile, I know. I should be happy for you, but I lost my parents so young, and I have only ever wanted to have a family, to feel accepted. Everything I have done, has been because of their loss. How could I not be jealous? I have worked my entire life to defy death itself, have *succeeded* in doing so, only to find that even that is not enough, that they are lost to me forever."

Angela is crying now, Fareeha can hear it in her breathing. Still, she does not turn to face Angela, for Angela has made no move towards touching her, and Fareeha thinks perhaps she is not the only one who cannot bear to have their soul bared, cannot bear to have those they love see the ugliest parts of them, cannot bear to see the face of a loved one in the moment of realization. Were

she in this position, she would not want to be seen, but some measure of comfort might make it easier. For this reason, Fareeha moves slightly, shifts left so that she and Angela's thighs touch, a silent *I am here*, a signal that *nothing you have said will keep me from you*.

Voice shaking, with sadness, yes, but anger also—and that surprises Fareeha, if only a little—Angela continues, "It seemed so unfair. *Seems* so, and I shouldn't be, but I am angry, that you can have this, can have your mother return from the dead, while I cannot. Haven't I, if anyone, earned it?" Another pause, only long enough to take a calming breath, "It also isn't fair, though, that I be angry with you. It isn't your fault that Ana lived, and my parents did not. I know this, but it was hard not to feel jealous, and angry. *Is* hard. So I've been avoiding you, if only because I didn't—don't—want to hurt you further, by being angry with you for something outside your control. I thought I might spare you pain, in doing so."

"You didn't!"

The words leave her mouth before Fareeha can stop them, not her own, but Amari's, and she regrets them immediately, regrets the way Angela sounds so sad and small when she replies, "I know that, now."

"It's alright—" Fareeha starts to say, but that is not true, it is *not* alright, and she knows better than to pretend it is, after her conversation with her mother.

"It isn't," Angela says, filling the silence that followed Fareeha's interjection. "It isn't, and I know it isn't. I was just so afraid that you would see how angry I was, how bitter I can be, and find it repulsive. I do. I can't stand anger, not after what happened between Jack and Gabriel." Fareeha looks at Angela, then, sees the way she bites her lip. "I can't stand anger, but I am angry, and jealous, and bitter, and all of the things I despise, I'm a hypocrite, and I'm afraid, so afraid, of being alone again. I couldn't stand to lose you, you know this. I just wanted—I thought—" she is crying too hard to finish the sentence.

Without hesitation, Fareeha pulls her into her arms, holds her just as she did her mother days before. Normally, the role of comforting would go to Pharah, but here, emotional as she is, only Fareeha will do, and Fareeha can be strong, after all.

For a few minutes, she says nothing, only holds Angela until she calms, and waits. She will not handle this like she did her mother, will not repeat her mistakes, will not say things she does not mean to make Angela feel better, will not hurt herself or lie in order to protect the woman she loves, but this does not mean she cannot be comforting, does not mean she cannot hold her.

When Angela has quietened, Fareeha allows herself to speak. Not like Angela did, words tumbling out one after another, not like her mother, either, apologies quick on her lips, but in a way that is her own. She speaks slowly, considering, halting, when necessary, mid-sentence, "While I'm still hurt—very much so—and I won't... haven't yet forgiven this, *can't* forgive you until I've had time to calm down, I understand, I think, and I'm not angry, not really. I can't be."

Her mother's voice, in the back of her head, *Inhale before you take the shot, the deeper the breath the calmer you are, the better your aim*.

She takes a deep breath, steels herself to continue. "I can't be because I also haven't been entirely honest. I've just... been afraid, too, that you would see me, and not like what you saw. I'm not... not who you think I am, not fully. I'm not whole as you are and I was afraid—am afraid—like you are, that you won't like me when you know the worst things about me."

Now Fareeha is crying, too, can feel tears start to slip down her cheeks. She hopes that Angela will not notice, face buried as it is in her shoulder. Crying in front of others has never been easy



for Fareeha, has been harder since she first became Amari, name and rank, but she cannot help but do so now.

"I was angry, when my mother returned. Angrier than I think I ever have been, and I shouldn't... shouldn't have been angry, I know. You, Hana, Mei-Ling, any of you would have been grateful to have your loved ones return to you and I... wasn't. I was angry, and then guilty that I was angry, and now I'm just... lost. Not angry with my mother," she adds, somewhat hastily, "just... the situation. It isn't easy for me, having her back. Isn't easy being back in her shadow. Isn't easy not knowing where I stand."

Angela hums in acknowledgement, and the part of her which is Amari hisses back *You do not know!* Fareeha bites it down, but knows, deep down that in a way, that part of her is right. Angela does not know, cannot know, unless Fareeha tells her. If Fareeha does not wish to keep hiding, does not wish to deal with the fear that she is unlovable, then she must speak now, must tell Angela everything. Now is a better time than any for her to do so, and she will not waste this opportunity.

She will not live in uncertainty.

One final breath, to steady herself, the type her mother takes just before firing her rifle, and while the air of finality is the same, Fareeha hopes that the outcome will be far different.

While she speaks, Angela is silent, still in her arms, the only indication that she is listening the way her arms tighten around Fareeha as she recounts the most painful of her fears, of her memories. She does not ask questions, and Fareeha is grateful. It is hard enough to say what she is without feeling like she is being interrogated, or worse, diagnosed.

As she is speaking, time once again seems to bend. Every sentence takes a year to stumble through, even as the moment between she and Angela seems suspended in time. Several times, she nearly stops, and is only able to continue when she focuses on the small, comforting circles Angela is rubbing on her back, or her breathing, or the smell of Angela's shampoo.

When she is done, she is exhausted, and thinks she could cry no longer even if she tried. A glance at the clock tells her that their conversation lasted no more than an hour, but Fareeha feels as if it has been much longer, for how else could she explain how profoundly different things are, now?

Angela says nothing, and the silence between them is taught, fraught with Fareeha's nervousness, a brittle thing which one wrong word might shatter. It stretches on, and on, and on until Fareeha thinks that she will have to be the one to break it, that Angela has no words to say to her, following her admission.

She opens her mouth to speak and—

Angela sits up, looks her in the eye, reaches out with one cold hand, tilts Fareeha's head until they are looking one another in the eye, her touch just gentle enough, no doubt the result of years handling patients.

"I love you," says she, "all of you. No matter who you are."

Fareeha proves herself a liar, and cries again.

At last, Angela's actions are explained. Mostly satisfactorily, I hope.

I was gonna have smut here and was *encouraged* to have it by friends but alas, it just Didn't Fit.

Hopefully you all felt this rang true emotionally? I try but sometimes... sometimes it's hard to tell.

Chapter title is from the song of the same name by Wet, again. No One Is Surprised.

Translation:

Schäri - Swiss German pet name taken from the French "chérie"

I was gonna write some other stuff before this update but then... I got a comment so nice I cried, and here I am. Seriously y'all sustain me.

Hope this finds you well. I'm always happy to hear from you, and hope you're happy to see my updates, too. Catch you on the flipside, when we conclude our story.

# Dreams

## Chapter Notes

### IT'S THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

Crossposted to [tumblr](#).

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

While little of import occurs in Fareeha's life in the next month—or, at least, little by the usual standards of Overwatch—Fareeha nonetheless finds that the world she inhabits on Tuesday could not be more different than the one in which she lived on the Wednesday prior. Because she has confided in Angela, and because she has found acceptance, the burden of a secret and the fear of rejection are, while not entirely absent, no longer looming quite so large in her life. In fact, nothing is changed, but to her mind the entire world seems different, brighter, with more space for her to breathe, and to be. Secrets are stifling, constricting things, and Fareeha is glad to have finally loosened the hold this particular secret held on herself. While not quite so good, the feeling of newfound freedom is not unlike the first time she was able to experience flight.

Initially, she worried that things between herself and Angela might change for the worse, and while they have changed, in a number of small ways, none of those ways have been *bad*, merely different. Most of the changes have been in her own behavior, not in Angela's, have been small shifts in the way she presents herself—in the way that she is more comfortable being more relaxed off of the field, revealing more of who she is as Fareeha, rather than trying to maintain a higher degree of continuity between Pharah and Fareeha—or in her own mood, as she relaxes into the thought that Angela sees enough worth in her *as she is* that she need not worry about being broken up with any time soon.

Not worrying about censoring herself, overmuch, free from the anxiety that her best may simply not be good enough, that she is too flawed to be lovable, Fareeha is able to breathe deeply for the first time in a long time. She has always enjoyed a good joke—or a bad one, if one asked Aleks' opinion—and she finds herself making still more terrible puns than she might normally.

(It is not until Lùcio observes this change, notes that she seems much happier lately—*must be nice having your mother around, huh?*—that the thought of the conditional nature of her mother's acceptance comes crashing back down upon her at once, and once again begins losing herself in questions of her value, and of her difference, and of her brokenness.)

Angela, no longer distant—in part because, knowing what she now does about Fareeha and Ana's present relationship, Fareeha does not think she *could* be jealous—notices the shift in Fareeha's mood immediately, and only then do the true implications of having opened up to Angela become apparent. While she does not treat a happy Fareeha any differently, Angela's concern is expressed differently from how it was previously, and is weighted with questions. They are not probing, not asked in overwhelming numbers, and she does not demand answers, but they are questions she would never have asked Fareeha before, questions she would never have considered. At first, the questions worry Fareeha—is there something wrong with her, will she be discharged if she is found wanting in some way? But the more Angela asks, the more the both of them seem to relax, to understand where the borders lie not just between parts of Fareeha, but within their relationship.

"Who are you now?" asks Angela with just the slightest downturn of her mouth; there is muted

surprise when Fareeha says that she is still only herself, but she seems pleased nonetheless. "Do you ever lose time?" is a question one evening as they lie in bed; when Fareeha answers that time seems to flow differently, but that she does not experience memory gaps, Angela merely hums, and turns the page in the book she is reading, nonchalant enough that Fareeha relaxes, just a bit more. Finally, "Are you happy, with who you are and how you are?" asked after they have eaten for the evening, when the two of them are alone in the kitchen, washing dishes.

How to answer that? There is much Fareeha is unhappy with, within herself. She wishes that her lung capacity were just that much better, that she might fly higher and for longer, making it easier for her to protect those whom she loves. She wishes that perhaps her jaw was not quite so strong, at times, wishes she fit a bit better conventional beauty standards. She wishes that she had an easier time bridging the gap between her thoughts and her words, such that she might better be able to express how much she cares about her friends, about her family, about Angela. All of those things, however, can be improved with training, or are superficial, or are a part of her very nature, and while she does not like them, they are acceptable faults, are not enough to make her unhappy with her very being.

Does she like who she is? Not always, but for the most part, yes. She works to protect those whom she loves, she is good at what she does, she finds herself to be a good person, at her core. To say that she is always happy with herself, always secure would be a lie—she does worry at times that she is wretched, and wrong, some incomplete thing, too broken by all that she has seen and done to be truly good, but Angela loves her, as do Lena and Reinhardt, and all of her friends in their own ways, and they are all good people, good people whom she loves and trusts. If they love her, then it follows that there is something about her which must be worth loving, some part of her that has value, no matter how she feels about herself at the time. Despite her faults, despite her misgivings about her own abilities and shortcomings, there is only one answer to Angela's question—

"Yes," and once she says it, she truly knows it to be so.

(Perhaps she is still adjusting, perhaps it will take time for her to reorient herself, now that her mother has returned, but she is happy enough with herself, comfortable enough with who she is, for the time being, that she can truly begin to relax, to let go of her fear of inadequacy, her anger, both directed inwards and outwards. This is enough.) "Then we have nothing to worry about," replies Angela, and Fareeha finds that, despite overwhelming evidence that there is *always* something to be worried about, especially in Overwatch, she believes the statement.

(In the quiet hours of the night, Fareeha still worries, but she turns in bed, and holds Angela close, breathes in the smell of floral shampoo, wrinkles her nose at the accompanying whiff of disinfectant, and is at peace. Angela is there when she is needed, now, even if she is not aware of such, for it is enough for her to simply exist in the same space as Fareeha, is enough reassurance for her to simply *be*, her presence a reminder that Fareeha is accepted, and loved. In the quiet hours of the night, Fareeha still worries, but the worrying is made easier by tangible evidence disproving her darkest thoughts.)

Only when Fareeha is able, at last, to relax, to reassure herself that she cannot undo all of the progress which they have made—or, at least, cannot do so simply by being herself—that she once again considers the question of her relationship with her mother. Now that she knows she can find acceptance, however hard it may be for her to allow herself to open up about herself, about her *way* of being (for that is how she has begun to think of it, with Angela's help, not a broken thing inside her, twisted up, but simply a different way in which she situates herself within the world), she must try to do so.

But how to broach the question? Certainly, it is not as simple as just pulling her mother aside and

saying as such, she *knows* how well that worked, last time, and she can hardly wait for some moment of vulnerability initiated by her mother, the way she had with Angela; her mother is many things, but vulnerable has never been one of them, her earlier crying having been quite an outlier, and the result of years spent apart. Now that Ana has returned, in earnest, now that she has once again assumed her role with Overwatch and is running missions again, now that she has resumed her role as Fareeha's mother, and sometime support on the field, she will not *allow* herself to be vulnerable, and especially not to be so in front of Fareeha. Another opportunity will not present itself to Fareeha in the same way as the one previous, so strikingly obvious, and she cannot trust herself to manufacture a scenario. All that is left to her is yet again to wait, and to watch, to find a time which feels right, in which they are both open enough to speak, and then act.

Time passes, in much the same way as it had before; progress seems all but halted, the waiting infinite, until all of a sudden, an opportunity presents itself, and Fareeha finds that she does not feel ready, does not remember what she intended to say, and how. Nevertheless, she cannot back down now, will not. How long until the next opportunity might present itself? How long do they have, truly? Such waiting cannot continue on forever.

She takes a deep breath, just like her mother taught her. She pictures the shot, imagines her intended outcome. She pulls the trigger, opens her mouth, and speaks.

It is a quiet moment in Watchpoint: Gibraltar's garden, early afternoon, with the sun at its highest, too warm for any but Ana and Fareeha to be outside. While it is not as beautiful as it once was, most of the plants long since having died without careful attention paid them, it is a quiet place to be. They are enjoying the stillness, the two of them together, over the remnants of their lunch. Side by side, they sit, sometimes speaking, sometimes not, merely enjoying the feeling, once again, of closeness, of connection. Like this, it is easy to pretend nothing changed at all, that they were never anything but close; it feels almost like a memory, would feel like one were it not for the fact that they never enjoyed such peace before, having previously had their silence interrupted by a younger Fareeha's rambunctious nature, or the tendency of their conversations to drift back towards Fareeha's intended enlistment. Neither of those things is a concern, any longer, and they can be as they ought to have been, as Fareeha imagined, in the year her mother was dead, they could have become.

In this instance of peace, Fareeha takes her shot, breaking the silence, and the moment. (Angela told her that in the past, bones sometimes needed to be rebroken so that they could set properly, and Fareeha imagines that this is what she is doing here, breaking the silence in order to work towards a greater understanding, a truer one.)

"Do you remember what you said to me, when we first spoke after your return?" Best to start at the heart of the problem, best to attempt to cut to the chase. Her mother needs no long introduction, and will want none. Never has either of them been the type to draw something like this out, been inclined to prolong things unnecessarily. They are soldiers, through and through, and an efficient kill is not only more merciful, but safer for the killer herself.

"I do," says her mother, and Fareeha turns to look at her, turns to see the skin tighten around her remaining eye in response. Doubtless, Ana knows this is not random, and is attempting to figure out what it is Fareeha is getting at, is trying to assess the situation like she might a battlefield.

"You said," Fareeha pauses a moment, decides to paraphrase rather than to try to restate exactly, to focus on the heart of the matter, "that you only ever wanted to protect me from war, that you wanted me to be well and whole."

"I did," is the response, slow and wary, "I still do. Just because it is impossible does not mean I cannot want it."

Well, Fareeha cannot argue with that. They are her own words, from her youth, when she told her mother she wanted to fly, and was told it would be impossible. That, however, is not the point.

"Yes, that's true, but you also said that I had grown strong, that I hadn't needed you. That was wrong. I did..." she feels herself choke up, slightly, and this was *not* her plan, not at all, she meant to be more detached, and it was easy to be so when this conversation was only abstract, only something she was imagining, but to admit vulnerability she must *become* vulnerable, "I *do* need you. I haven't stopped needing you, not ever."

Now Fareeha is the one crying, is the one someone is attempting to hold. She does not allow the embrace, not yet, does not think about how she must look, tears making her eyeliner run, nose doubtless reddening, as it always does when she cries, does not think about how much it would comfort *Ana* to hold her, now. If Fareeha is to do what she needs to, to say what she needs to, it must be all at once. No interruptions, no matter how well intentioned.

"You were right," says she, "war wasn't what I thought it would be. You said that it changed people, made them bitter where before they were happy, made them empty where before they were full, made them fragmented where before they were whole. You were right. It does all of those things, and more. Did them to me. Is still doing them, every time I go out on a mission."

Here is the second test, after admitting to vulnerability, can she say what comes next? If so, then the last admission will surely not be too much for her. If only she can say this much.

"You were—" she falters, this is so *damn* hard, "You were right. I war wasn't good for me. It wasn't what I thought it was. I thought I knew, seeing you and Reinhardt when I was growing up. Seeing posters of Commander Morrison and interviews with Secretary Adawe. I thought I knew, as much as anyone could. I didn't. I wasn't prepared."

Her mother is looking at her strangely now, not pity but *understanding* in her eyes, and for a second the part of her which is Amari, and still very much bitter towards her mother flashes up, wants to tell her that she does not know, not yet.

Before her mother can speak, she continues, "You were right, it broke me." There it is, the final admission, the one she feared most, that she is not what her mother *thinks* her to be. "I know I made the right decision, I would do it all again, but I'm not strong, أمي, I'm not whole like you think I am."

Now, her mother's arms are around her. Now, she allows herself to be the one comforted, allows herself to be weak and vulnerable and all of the things she hates being, because she can be so, here, because it is safe to be so, she knows this now.

"Oh Fareeha," her mother says, voice much the same as it was when she broke her arm at age eleven, the arm she no longer has, "Did you think I did not know? I know you, I know my daughter, but this does not make you weak. You make think war has broken you, may have felt it twist you, transform you into something you could not have imagined before, but you still want to do what is right. You still get up, every day, prepared to fight again." Somewhat wryly, her mother adds, "Even I couldn't do that, eventually. You are no less strong for being changed. You are still my Fareeha. You always will be."

If Fareeha was crying before, then she is sobbing now. No longer is she sad, or scared, but relieved, heart so full with the knowledge that she is loved, unconditionally, that her mother need not even ask how she has changed to accept her for who she is now, that she cannot contain her emotions.

It is confusing, to feel so deeply, and more than a little frightening, but with her mother here she

can weather it, at least for now.

And in the midst of everything, a memory.

It is years before, she is a child once again. In this same garden, she is playing. Reinhardt is there, her childhood hero in all of his glory, impossibly tall and strong as he seemed in those days, and her mother also, seeming every bit as powerful herself, but comforting in equal measure. They are all of them laughing at Reinhardt's expense; there is a new poster of him, and her mother has bought it for Fareeha, likely as a dig at her colleague as well, as it is ridiculous. On it, his hair has been styled like he is posing for the cover of a romance novel, and not recruiting for an international peacekeeping force.

"Doesn't his hair look ridiculous, Farah?" her mother asks, using the childhood nickname Fareeha has all but forgotten.

"It's the source of my power!" boasts he, flexing, "I need it to grow so that I can stay strong!"

Young Fareeha laughs, disbelieving.

"Do you need proof? Just look at your mother's hair! So long! Have you ever met anyone stronger?"

She pauses, considering what he has said, and then, "أُمِّي," says Fareeha, very seriously, "I want to grow my hair longer."

In response, her mother merely laughs, scooping Fareeha up in her arms. "You are already strong enough, حبيبتى. You need never be anything more than what you are: my daughter."

The sea breeze picks up, and, carried from where it grows on the vine, a whiff of jasmine reaches Fareeha's nose.

## Chapter End Notes

First, quick acknowledgements:

I gotta thank Skitch for holding my hand every step of the way. There's a reason this is dedicated to them.

Then Mia, for being the absolute best and letting me talk through all the bad fic ideas I have until I get to a good one.

And lastly Mal/wintersanarchy on tumblr, for drawing me art!! I died. Like for real I'm dead rn.

Now, translations:

أُمِّي - mother

حبيبتى - darling

Chapter title is a Wet song, yet again, because I'm predictable. Give it a listen, it's less depressing than the others.

Farah is a pretty common nickname for people named Fareeha, and yes, it's pronounced just like Pharah. I like to imagine she picked the name Pharah to honor what her mother had called her, assuming at the time Ana was dead. (From there Pharah somewhat eclipsed Farah, in her mind.)

Some numbers:

This series is now 27,966 words long.

If you've read the whole series you've read 91 pages ...plus my longass A/Ns.

Average writing time per chapter was 157 minutes, with no significant outliers.

No data on the time spent plotting, editing, and translating, unfortunately. It was a lot, though.

Some business:

First, I could really use a beta. Let me know if you'd be down for that. I'll write you things, and love you forever.

Second, I'm taking a quick break from this series, like a week or two, to work on other stuff. Some prompts on tumblr [which you can feel free to add to](#), two

Overwatch Big Bang fills, and a fic/art trade with a dear friend. BUT I'll be back soon with something else for this series. It's not dead yet.

Third, and related... IDK which of two fics I'm writing next. Either I'll post a oneshot about Ana, which would take slightly longer, next, or launch into a multichapter from Angela's point of view to sort of... even things out. If you have an opinion, again, let me know.

Aaaaand that's all I can think of atm!!! It's been fun, your lovely comments have sustained me, and I hope this improved your day, because you improve mine.

Let me know what you think, and I'll see y'all when I see ya.

Rory

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!